

Washington, DC -- U.S Representative Michael A. Arcuri (D-Utica) announced today that the Speaker of the House of Representatives has appointed him to the bipartisan House-Senate conference committee charged with crafting the final version of legislation authorizing funding for Amtrak and passenger rail service nationwide. During House consideration of Amtrak authorization legislation, Arcuri sponsored amendments to directly address New York State's passenger rail priorities.

"As a conferee, I have a seat at the table to fight for New York families struggling to afford sky-rocketing commuter costs," **said Arcuri, a member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee**. "Across our district, I've heard from families, business and local leaders who know that rail expansion and improvement must be a top priority to save consumers money and invest in energy efficiency. Improving our rail infrastructure and service must be part of our long-term transportation strategy to effectively decrease our nation's reliance on finite fossil fuels, help local families with transportation costs and foster economic development where we need it most."

The Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008 (H.R. 6003), which passed the House of Representatives in June, would authorize \$2.5 billion in grants over five years for intercity passenger rail, funding an increasingly necessary transportation alternative that will decrease commuter costs and travel times, as well as decrease dependence on foreign oil and improve the environment. By improving and expanding passenger rail, this bill creates alternatives for commuters hit by record high fuel prices and increasingly congested airports and highways.

Arcuri is one of only two freshman members selected to the House conference committee, which is made up of ten Democrats and seven Republicans. The role of the Committee will be to find compromises between the House and Senate bill in order to craft a version which will be submitted for final passage.

As a conferee, Arcuri will be able to work to ensure critical authorization for Upstate New York rail is included in the final legislation.

In the House bill, Arcuri worked with colleagues from both parties, as well as Governor Paterson's office, to ensure the Northeast Corridor and New York's unique rail needs were

addressed. By authorizing \$4.2 billion for Amtrak capital grants through 2013, H.R. 6003 would help to repair the Northeast Corridor, including rail service in New York, rehabilitate bridges, and provide capital improvements and maintenance over its entire network. Arcuri also offered amendments, which were incorporated into the bill's comprehensive Manager's Amendment, to improve passenger rail service in New York State.

"It is an honor to serve as a conferee on this critical legislation and work with Republicans and Democrats in both the House and Senate to make sure we invest in rail infrastructure to meet the needs of communities across the country," **Arcuri said**. "If we are to have a robust and successful rail system that users can rely on, then we must make a bipartisan commitment to support Amtrak throughout New York and across the nation."

The National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission recently recommended that the U.S. establish a high-speed rail network spanning the entire country. H.R. 6003 would authorize \$1.75 billion for grants to States and/or Amtrak to finance the construction and equipment for 11 authorized high-speed rail corridors.

It would also alleviate rail "choke points" by providing \$520 million over four years in congestion grants to States and Amtrak for high-priority rail corridors to reduce congestion and facilitate ridership growth.

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